

**DRAFT MINUTES
SNOWMOBILE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Best Western Alpine Lodge
833 West Main Street
Gaylord, Michigan
February 6, 2007**

Chairman Mr. Manson called the meeting of the Snowmobile Advisory Committee (SAC) to order at 9:36 a.m., Tuesday, February 6, 2007, in Gaylord, Michigan.

Members Present:

Bill Manson, Chair, Region III, Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA), Grand Rapids
James Duke, Region I, MSA, Munising
Bill Lucas, Region II, MSA, Cadillac
Lee Murray, At-Large, Hopkins
Jack Nelson, Business Community, Greenville
Orville Olson, Representative at Large, Ludington
David Thomas, Trail Sponsors, Marquette

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Rick McVey, USDA, Ottawa National Forest
Anne Okonek, USDA, Ottawa National Forest
Carol Boll, Huron-Manistee National Forest
Terry L. Johnson, Antrim County Sheriff's Department

Staff Present:

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, State Trails Unit Manager, FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, Recreation and Trails Program Coordinator, FMFM, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Capt. Curt Bacon, Law Enforcement Division (LED), Marquette
Lt. Tom Courchaine, LED, Crystal Falls
William O'Neill, FMFM, Gaylord
Don Klingler, FMFM, Gaylord
Mark Hanson, FMFM, Alpena
Loretta Cwalinski, FMFM, Gaylord

Mr. Manson welcomed everyone. The Committee, the Department of Natural Resources (Department) staff, and the audience introduced themselves.

MINUTES

The minutes of the December 7, 2006 SAC meeting was acknowledged.

Motion was made by Mr. Duke to adopt the minutes of the December 7, 2006 meeting, seconded by Mr. Lucas. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Law Enforcement Equipment Grants Sub-Committee -- **Mr. Murray** advised that the committee revisited the denial of Sheriff's department grant requests for breathalyzers and 800 MHz radios. **Mr. Murray** stated he spoke with Mr. Kubisiak and Lt. Creig Grey to discuss grants requirements and learned there are no specific criteria for equipment. He read a letter explaining the need for the equipment for safety reasons and the need for funds to be available to Sheriff's departments.

Mr. Duke questioned what criteria are necessary to prove the MHz radios are necessary. **Mr. Murray** explained that he thinks the Department's policy is that the Sheriff departments should be funding those from other sources as well. **Mr. Murray** feels the snowmobile fund should help pay for these radios. Discussion continued on funding and the grant process.

Mr. Manson asked Mr. Radabaugh how much money is currently funded to Sheriff's departments for snowmobile enforcement, which is about \$1.1 million. **Mr. Kubisiak** stated grants are issued very close to the amount available and not all of the equipment requests could be funded this year. **Mr. Murray** will make a formal request to Mr. Kubisiak for that information.

Mr. Kubisiak stated the Department will be establishing a workgroup to review and develop criteria for equipment purchases in Marine, ORV, and Snowmobile Enforcement programs. The workgroup will be chaired by Law Enforcement and include a representative from the snowmobile Law Enforcement Subcommittee.

Mr. Manson stated he would like to have recommendations for equipment criteria from the snowmobile law enforcement sub-committee by the June SAC meeting. He asked Mr. Murray to provide his report to him a few weeks in advance.

Finance Sub-Committee -- **Mr. Olson** reported the group met several times and said they have the trail permit fee increase set. He stated Forest, Mineral, and Fire Management's snowmobile allocation was increased by \$500,000 and would like a report why the increase is needed if the Department will not be grooming trails next year.

Mr. Manson said nothing has been decided from their group. They are hoping for a long-term ten-year budget and will get with Mr. DeBrabander and Mr. Joe Taylor. **Mr. Olson** said he can come to Lansing to meet if needed.

Mr. Manson asked for an update on the M-65 bridge trail proposal. **Mr. Kubisiak** referred the committee to the update in their packets. Based on a conversation with Jeff Mathews from Iosco County they are still working with Consumers Energy (CE) to resolve issues relating to the proposed trail alignment near CE's administrative parking lot. CE also wants to complete some timbering in the vicinity of the proposed route before approving the trail. **Mr. Kubisiak** stated it is his understanding the County will be scheduling a meeting with all effected landowners in the near future to resolve any remaining issues. The Forest Service will proceed with public scoping when all issues are resolved with the other landowners. Once the issues are resolved and the Forest Service completes their scoping process the County will need to complete a trail proposal and submit it to the Department.

Mr. Manson asked if Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is requiring the bridge deck to be resurfaced. **Mr. Kubisiak** stated based on previous discussion with local MDOT officials there is a concern with potential snowmobiling impacts to the bridge deck. Specific maintenance requirements will need to be worked out between the local MDOT and the grant sponsor.

OLD BUSINESS

EFT Update -- Mr. Kennedy advised that Ms. Christie Bayus, Grants Management, was unable to attend the meeting. He updated the committee on the sixteen clubs that are still not EFT ready. For assistance with EFT registration process, clubs should call the Treasury Vendor Registration help-line at 1-888-734-9749 or 517-373-4111. **Mr. Olson** requested e-mail addresses for the clubs that are not registered and said he would contact them.

SAC Bylaws Update – Mr. Thomas stated he will have all the information gathered and ready for the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Review of State Travel Reimbursement Regulations -- Mr. Kubisiak reported Snowmobile Advisory Committee members may be reimbursed for travel expenses relating to SAC meetings, and related pre-approved meetings in accordance with state travel regulations set by the Department of Management and Budget. He reviewed the travel expense reimbursement request form and stated that in order to be eligible for lodging the meeting site must be at least 15 miles from home or worksite. Meals will be reimbursed at actual cost up to the maximum allowable limits subject to established departure and arrival times. **Mr. Olson** asked for more information on when overnight stays will be allowed. **Mr. DeBrabander** will follow-up with Program Services and get back to the committee.

STAFF REPORTS

Law Enforcement -- Sheriff Terry Johnson reported their county emergency locator trail sign system is working well. He reported several minor accidents and that the signs are helpful. **Mr. Olson** recognized the sponsors for the emergency locator signs.

Capt. Bacon reported Mullet Lake trail has had good compliance with speed limit and curfew restrictions. Only a few incidents were reported. He noted businesses and residents are doing a good job getting the word out about the new regulations. He noted some stop signs and curfew signs were vandalized. He reported nine snowmobile fatalities statewide to date. **Capt. Bacon** announced his retirement and introduced Lt. Tom Courchaine as his replacement. **Lt. Courchaine** is the District Law Supervisor in Crystal Falls. **Mr. Manson** thanked Capt. Bacon for a great working relationship and all the assistance he provided over the years.

US Forest Service Report -- Mr. Rick McVey, USDA, Ottawa National Forest reported that a decision was made by the District Ranger to proceed with the Buck Lake

Snowmobile Trail Project in Watersmeet, however, the decision is under appeal by two organizations. The project is currently under review at the Regional Office with a final decision expected this month. He reported a portion of Trail 13 on the Ottawa National Forest was closed due to conflicts with logging operations. It will be closed for the remainder of the season.

Anne Okonek, USDA, Ottawa National Forest reported a lack of snow in their area and the snowmobile trails are open, but not groomed as of this time. She reported the Forest Service is conducting recreational use surveys this winter and thanked MSA for advertising the survey in their magazine. She reported the feasibility study for a bridge over the Whitefish River is ongoing.

Carol Boll, Huron-Manistee National Forest reported they are conducting recreational use surveys and they are continuing work on the 56th Street bypass in Baldwin.

Mr. O'Neill reported the Marl Lake trail proposal is under appeal pending a final decision.

RECREATION SPECIALIST

Recreation Specialist Reports were included in the Committee's meeting packets and will be attached to the minutes.

Mr. Manson noted Ms. Pearson's report and referenced the Rogers City trail proposal and a meeting he attended with the Unit Manager. He stated the Unit Manager had a detailed trail proposal checklist and asked if this is standard practice across the state. He believes there should be one consistent checklist for all the clubs to follow.

Mr. Radabaugh said without knowing the details of the particular trail issue he thinks the Unit Manager was trying to be thorough. He noted Forest Certification is a factor and the trail proposal form may need to be updated to address those requirements. He noted what works for one trail proposal may not work for another based on site specific circumstances. Discussion continued.

Mr. Olson said he will send a copy of the checklist to Mr. O'Neill for his review and follow-up with the Unit Manager. **Mr. Manson** said he would like equal review of the requirements before a decision is made.

Mr. Manson noted Mr. Yesney's report mentioned a white paper on rail-trail issues in the Upper Peninsula. Discussion continued on railroad grade ownership and State rights.

Mr. Radabaugh stated there is nothing new to report on the Rogers City quarry issue, and that letters have been exchanged between the attorneys and the county regarding the bridge removal at Viaduct Road on the Yuma to Copemish grade.

Mr. Duke asked Mr. McVey to clarify the snowmobile trail issues at Buck Lake. **Mr. McVey** stated the challenge is that there has never been an environmental impact statement done for the entire snowmobile trail system in the State of Michigan. There is

also a hawk's nest near the trail that some folks are trying to make an issue. **Mr. McVey** said a trail proposal should soon be submitted for the Military Bridge.

Mr. Thomas suggested a letter be sent to Mr. Kennedy to let him know the trail proposal is coming. **Mr. Manson** requested the SAC also be notified.

Mr. Radabaugh reported snowmobile trail permit sales are currently 47% below last year's sales.

Mr. Nelson suggested an early purchase (pre-season) discount for folks that buy their snowmobile permits early. Discussion continued over incentives for trail permits.

Motion was made by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Mr. Thomas recommending consideration of an early purchase discount incentive for snowmobile trail permits. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Manson noted this would require a legislative change.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Bill Caskey, Jordan Valley Trails Council asked if the Recreation Specialist reports are added to the minutes on the website. **Mr. Kubisiak** said if he receives a report it will be attached to the minutes. **Mr. Manson** said he would like to see the reports added consistently.

Mr. Caskey also asked if in the grant handbook, or anywhere else, it is mentioned how much snow is needed before grooming. **Mr. Manson** is not aware of any criteria, other than keeping the trail smooth. Problems can occur if there is not sufficient snow.

Mr. Manson questioned why a club was denied a grooming reimbursement. **Mr. Radabaugh** said payment was denied because the club did not pre-schedule the grooming activity with the field contact as specified in the handbook. **Mr. Manson** believes the clubs should be making the decision whether or not to groom.

Mr. Nelson asked why there was not a warning letter issued first. **Mr. O'Neill** said he would be glad to look into any of the payment denials.

Mr. Tom Koscinski, Roscommon-Higgins Trail Club asked if their field contacts are in charge of finding new clubs to take over grooming on trails currently groomed by the Department.

Mr. Manson said Mr. Lucas will be the taking the lead.

Mr. Lucas said he held several meetings with potential clubs and several more meetings are planned.

Mr. Lucas stated that at the workgroup meeting they discussed new groups being formed waiving certain rules for equipment when clubs take over trails that were formerly groomed by the Department.

Mr. Kennedy noted under current guidelines new clubs must be in the program for at least two years before they are eligible for equipment and noted budget implications.

Mr. Lucas made a motion, second by Mr. Duke to waive the 2-year requirement for any new trail sponsor that takes over grooming on trails formerly groomed by the Department. Motion for adoption unanimously carried.

Mr. Manson said that maybe the Department groomers could be turned over to the new clubs either through auction or other means. He would like to see the grooming equipment at Twin Lakes be covered somehow to protect them from the elements.

Mr. Larry Marzean, Alpena Snowmobile Association said that there seems to be inconsistencies on trail inspections and their trail was recently written up for 20 violations. The field contact came out and inspected the trail at Christmas, when it should have been done in November. Atlanta has a new fire officer doing inspections.

Mr. Hanson stated he is new to the program and only had the manual to reference at the time of inspection.

Mr. Manson asked if there should be a policy change on inspections. **Mr. O'Neill** said that it's a good idea to have the field contact ride along with the groomer to do inspections together. He will check on the Ogemaw Hills trail, and the one at Canada Creek for further information.

Mr. Paul Mulder, Leota Trail explained his role as an ORV contact. He then added that there are similar discussions within their ORV meetings, and is rather disappointed with a few of those issues. He expressed concerns over the increase of the snowmobile permit, versus the lower fee for ORVs. He feels the two groups should have a combined meeting, or would like to encourage members to attend both meetings. **Mr. Manson** suggested Mr. Mulder request higher ORV permit fees at tomorrow night's ORV Advisory Committee meeting.

Mr. David Becker, St. Helen Snow Packers has concerns over the new Land Use Permits regarding their group's 'fun run' to support their grooming program. The fees increased from a \$50 fee, to \$75, and up to \$200 last year. They decided to not get a permit this year; they received a failure to perform, and it was suggested there be a fine to every participant. He stated that they all have trail permits and the snowmobiles are registered by the Secretary of State, and can't understand why they need a land use permit. Their group did finally get a permit.

Mr. Tom Gallagher, St. Helen Snowpackers said that this last year their permit took much longer to process.

Mr. Manson said that at the meetings he attended regarding land use he did not think that the snowmobile events would need an event permit. He believes snowmobilers already pay for trail permits and registrations, and should not have to be part of this process. He stated MSA will be hosting a ride-in and does not intend to get a permit.

Mr. Radabaugh referenced a meeting with Mr. Manson and Mr. Dave Spalding in which Mr. Manson was given the opportunity to provide the Department with more details in writing regarding MSA's snowmobiling events, so the Department could further review

this issue and determine if a permit is needed. To-date the Department has not received a response and the offer still stands.

Mr. Rodney M. Altman, Presque Isle Sno Trails asked Mr. Kubisiak who to submit an application for ORV funding to. **Mr. Kubisiak** advised those requests should be submitted to Grants Management and information is available online. Grant applications are available in June and due August 1. **Mr. Altman** also wondered how they would go about filing for damages incurred by logging companies. **Mr. Kubisiak** suggested he notify the Unit Manager who could look into the details of the timber sale contract.

Mr. Bud Longroy asked if there has been any feedback from V&V insurance. **Mr. Manson** said he will meet with Mr. Longroy after the meeting.

Mr. Thomas stated that before the last SAC meeting in Wetmore there was a meeting with equipment manufacturers. **Mr. Manson** said he requested the manufactures to develop standard equipment package pricing for grooming equipment.

NEXT MEETING

Mr. Radabaugh stated that due to budget reductions he has asked staff to reduce travel and meetings by 50%. He proposed removing the April and August SAC meetings.

Mr. Manson agreed to remove the August meeting, but still wants to hold a meeting in April.

Mr. Nelson suggested moving one of the meetings to Lansing.

Mr. Manson said he will call Mr. Radabaugh within 30 days to decide if the April meeting is necessary.

The next SAC meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, April 10, 9:30 a.m., BJ's Restaurant & Catering, 990 North Center Street, Gaylord, Michigan.

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Public Present:

Garry Sansote, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Don Carroll, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Bud Martin, Ogemaw Hills Snow Club
Bradley Potter, W MI Snow Council
William R. Caskey, Jordan Valley Trls Ccl
Mary Caskey, Jordan Valley Trls Ccl
John Houk, P.I. & NE MI Council
Kaye Houk, P.I. & NE MI Council
Larry Marzan, Alpena Snowmobile Assoc
Bob Eller, Alpena Snowmobile Assoc
Ray Compeau, Alpena Snowmobile Assoc

Rodney Altman, P.I. & NE MI Council
LeVerne Longroy, Ogemaw Hills Snow
Tom Gallagher, St Helen SnoPackers
Dave Becker, St Helen SnoPackers
Robert Fenner, St Helen SnoPackers
Tom Kozlowski, Rosco-Higgins
Tom Koscinski, Rosco-Higgins
Al Persondek, Rosco-Higgins
Al Green, Cadillac Winter Promotions
Rolland Reiger, P.I. Snow Trails

RECREATION SPECIALIST REPORTS

February 6, 2007

FROM ROBIN PEARSON – EASTERN LOWER PENINSULA RECREATION SPECIALIST

Rogers City North Connector – Met with applicant & Atlanta Unit staff 1-9-07. Black

Mountain Re-route – DNR Working with DEQ to submit a permit application. Michigan

Limestone Quarry Re-route – Continued work with MLO, DNR and attorneys. Mullet

Lake Stretch of the Gaylord to Cheboygan Rail Trail opened for snowmobiles. Hawks to

Alpena, Paxton Spur & Rogers City Spur – Request to prohibit wheeled motorized vehicles on these rail trails awaiting review in Lansing.

DNR staff will be working with Mr. Manson to improve the consistency and clarity of instructions and list of items that needs to be provided by the applicant when requesting a new trail or re-route of a trail. This information will most likely be provided in next year's grant handbook.

DNR is working to create trail maps for snowmobile, ORV and non-motorized pathways from staff generated GPS data.

FROM TODD NEISS - WLP RECREATION SPECIALIST

DNR field staff from Traverse City Forest Management Unit, and Western Lower Peninsula District will nominate the "Garfield Road Trail Safety Improvement" project for acquisition funding via the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) program for 2007. The objective is to reroute the snowmobile trail and horse trail off the shoulder of county highway 611 by acquiring 2.5 miles of private lands either thru purchase, or long term lease agreements.

Irons Area Tourist Association has submitted a Trail Development Proposal to designate a section of railroad grade in Lake County as snowmobile trail. Proposal is being reviewed.

U.S.F.S. has submitted a trail development proposal for review by field staff in Traverse City Unit for the "Garlets" re-route proposal. This re-route has gone thru the U.S.F.S. review process already, and because it's on "their" land is physically in place. I asked the USFS to send in a DNR trail proposal form to determine if club should receive payment for maintaining this new 1 mile section of trail.

FROM RON YESNEY - WUP RECREATION SPECIALIST

Preparing a "White Paper" for Jim Ekdahl that highlights the current status of our Rail-Trail issues in the U.P. The paper will include an abstract, statement of the problem, impacts if something isn't done, potential solutions, and the details and specifics of each grade that we own – or that is eligible for acquisition.

Working with the Gogebic Range Trail Authority to address the issue of Wal-Mart's plans to build a store and parking lot across trail two east of Ironwood. We are not yet sure what our options are for a reroute - or for altering Wal-Mart's plans.

Ironwood to Wisconsin -- The Trail 100 re-establishment proposal north of Ironwood has been approved.

Dukes to Sand River -- Will be meeting with Trails Inc to review their status with the Dukes to Sand River Trail proposal.

Chocolay Township -- Working with Chocolay Township to finalize their proposal to create a recreation bridge over the Chocolay River and develop a one-way business loop through Harvey.

Buck Lake -- A trail proposal has been submitted to reopen a segment of trail in the Ottawa National Forest north of Watersmeet that was closed in 2002 due to land control issues. The new proposal would reroute the trail off of private land, onto USFS property. If approved, the trail would greatly improve grooming efficiency and reduce congestion by reestablishing this north-south connector in the West UP. The proposal is now being held up by a group of people who are protesting the USFS's request to create this trail.

I am working on updating all of the West U.P. MDOT highway crossing permits.

FROM DAN MOORE - EUP RECREATION SPECIALIST

Due to the lack of snow early in the season most activity has been dealing with FMFM Boating Access Sites and the ORV program. Still working on the Whitefish River Bridge feasibility study.